

## **Public Health Officials Urge Caution When Buying Holiday Toys For Kids**

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 13, 2000)** - Kentucky parents have been hitting the malls buying toys for the holidays this month. The Cabinet for Health Services wants to pass along a few safety tips to make sure this holiday season is a safe one for all children.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission requires toy manufacturers to meet safety standards and to label certain toys that could be a hazard for younger children. Parents should look for these labels in toys and gifts their children receive.

"Parents should evaluate toys as soon as they get them to make sure they are age appropriate and don't have small parts that could be a choking hazard for young children," said Mike Cavanah, program administrator in the Environmental Management Branch of the Department for Public Health. "Small parts in toys for older kids should be kept away from younger siblings."

One of the more popular toys this year are lightweight scooters. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 30,000 emergency room injuries associated with scooters have been reported this year. Nearly 85 percent of these injuries are to children age 14 and under.

The commission and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign recommend appropriate safety gear with scooters, including helmet, elbow and knee pads when riding. Adult supervision is recommended for children ages 8 and under. Parents should check scooters for hazards and make sure the toys are ridden on smooth, paved surfaces.

(Two kinds of scooters were recalled this month because of safety issues concerning handles: Kent Kickin' Mini-Scooters and Kash 'N Gold Racer X20 <sup>TM</sup> recalled a total of 97,500 scooters in cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.)

Riders should avoid steep hills and should never hitch a ride from a car, bus truck or other vehicle. Don't ride the scooters at night.

Here are a few general holiday toy safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Follow recommended age ranges on toy packages. Toys that are too advanced could be a safety hazard for younger children.
- Check the size of the toy and make sure there are no parts that could be swallowed.
- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully. If the toy is appropriate for your child, show him how to use it properly.

- Children under age 3 can choke on small parts contained in toys or games and balls with a diameter of one and three-quarters of an inch or less.
- Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. (Four children died from choking on balloons in 1999.)
- Watch for strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.

For more information, see these websites: [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org) or [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) or [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)